

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10

April 2004

Frequently Asked Questions Soil Testing and Cleanup of Le Roi Smelter and Residential and Common-Use Areas, Northport, Washington

Background and General Topics

Q: Why is EPA doing soil testing and cleanup in Northport?

A: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is doing work in Northport as a result of the findings of earlier sampling conducted by EPA at the former Le Roi Smelter. In 2001, EPA sampled the smelter property, several other mine and mill sites in Stevens County, as well as areas along the upper reaches of the Columbia River. The 2001 sampling found higher-than-normal amounts of heavy metals in soil and sediment at several of the mine and mill sites. The Le Roi Smelter was one of the sites where EPA found elevated concentrations of heavy metals. As a result, EPA is doing more sampling to determine the extent of contamination. The Agency will begin a cleanup of contaminated areas this summer.

Q: How did the soil become contaminated?

A: The Le Roi Smelter caused soil contamination, mainly from 1896 to 1921, when it processed ores and produced large amounts of wastes containing lead, arsenic, and other heavy metals. By 1908, the Le Roi Smelter was one of the largest smelters on the West Coast, processing up to 500 tons of ore per day. Historically, wastes were either stored at the Le Roi Smelter site or flushed directly into the Columbia River. Some waste materials, such as slag bricks, may have been moved from the site to

nearby properties for use as construction materials. The smokestack at the smelter also released contaminants into the air, which were then carried by wind currents to nearby properties. The primary source for most of the contamination at Northport properties is the smokestack.

Q: What will EPA do to keep community members informed?

A: EPA will use a variety of tools to keep the community informed and involved in our work in Northport. We will send fact sheets and postcards summarizing our work and technical findings; host public meetings, as needed, to provide current information and discuss community concerns; post the latest project information on the EPA website; and continually update the information that is kept at the Northport City Hall for public review. The materials at City Hall include all project data and reports.

Q: How is the Le Roi Smelter/Northport project related to the work that EPA is doing on the Upper Columbia River?

A: The Le Roi Smelter/Northport project focuses on soils in and near Northport. EPA is conducting a separate project to investigate hazardous substance contamination at the Upper Columbia River from the Grand Coulee Dam to the U.S.–Canadian border. Data gathered as part of the Le Roi Smelter/Northport project will be used by the team working on the Upper Columbia River project. To learn more about the Upper Columbia River

project, visit www.epa.gov/r10/earth, click on *index A-Z*, click on *U*, then on *Upper Columbia River*.

Q: What is the role of the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE)?

A: The Washington State Department of Ecology will represent the State's environmental interests at the site by advising the EPA on technical issues and environmental cleanup requirements. Ecology will also act as a long-term resource to the community for questions on state environmental issues. For more information, contact Sandra Treccani, DOE Project Manager, at 509-329-3412 or stre461@ecy.wa.gov.

Q: What is the role of the Washington State Department of Health (DOH)?

A: The role of DOH is to help the community understand health risks. DOH will review and evaluate sampling data generated by EPA, and write a health consultation for the Le Roi Smelter site. For more information, contact Lenford O'Garro, Site Health Assessor, toll-free at 877-485-7316 or Lenford.O'Garro@DOH.WA.GOV.

Q: What is the role of the Northeast Tri County Health District?

A: The Health District is the local agency responsible for public health. The Health District will work with the community and other agencies, especially the Washington State Department of Health, to review plans for cleanup and removal, project data, and other aspects of the project that can impact the health of citizens. For more information, contact Jim Matsuyama, Environmental Health Director, at 800-776-6207 or jmatsu@netri.org.

Q: How can I learn more about the project?

A: There are several ways you can learn more about the Le Roi Smelter/ Northport project.

Visit the EPA Region 10 Website:



EPA is working with state and local agencies to clean up the Le Roi Smelter and other Northport properties.

www.epa.gov/r10earth/
click on *index A-Z*
click on *L*
click on *Le Roi Smelter*

Contact EPA Staff:

General information:

Deborah Neal

Community Involvement Coordinator

206-553-0115 or 800-424-4372

neal.deborah@epa.gov

Technical information:

Earl Liverman

On-Scene Coordinator

208-664-4858

liverman.earl@epa.gov

TTY users, call 800-877-8339.

Read Project Documents:

An information repository, which contains project documents and detailed reports, is available for review at the Northport City Hall. Project documents may also be requested from EPA staff.

Contamination and Health Affects

Q: What contaminants are present in Northport soil?

A: Several heavy metal contaminants related to smelter operations are found at elevated concentrations in and near Northport, including the contaminants of concern, lead and arsenic.

Q: Does the contamination exceed Washington State standards?

A: Yes, the contaminants of concern, lead and arsenic, are found at concentrations well above cleanup levels established by the Washington Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). MTCA is a law that was passed by voters as Initiative 97 and has guided cleanup in the State of Washington since 1989.

Q: Have blood-lead levels been tested in Northport residents?

A: Yes. The Northeast Tri County Health District and the Washington State Department of Health measured blood-lead levels in a total of 62 children in the Northport area in December 1992 and September 1993. The testing events did not identify levels of lead in these children above the Centers for Disease Control blood-lead level of 10 micrograms per deciliter, the level of concern.

Q: How can lead and arsenic affect the health of my family?

A: Exposure to lead and arsenic over time can cause a variety of health problems. Exposure to lead has been linked to learning and developmental deficits in children, anemia, elevated blood pressure, and poor vitamin D absorption. Exposure to arsenic has been linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancers of the skin, bladder, kidney, prostate, liver and lung.

Q: How can I reduce my family's exposure to lead and arsenic?

A: If you are uncertain about the safety of soil in your neighborhood, you can take a few precautionary steps to reduce your family's exposure. To make sure you do not accidentally eat or swallow soil, or bring it into your house: wash your hands and face after playing outdoors and before cooking or eating; wear gloves, shoes, and pants when working with soil in your yard; remove shoes before entering your house; control dust by wiping down counters, tables, and window sills; wash fruits and vegetables grown in your yard before eating them; prevent pets from tracking soil into your house; and maintain good grass coverage to minimize areas of bare soil in your yard.



For nearly 25 years, the LeRoi Smelter produced wastes containing lead, arsenic and other heavy metals.

Q: Is it okay to eat fruits and vegetables grown in Northport?

A: Yes. Wash fruits and vegetables before eating them to remove any soil and reduce possible exposure. Lead and arsenic and other metals are not typically found in fruits and vegetables in Northport at levels that would cause a health concern.

Q: Should I be concerned about letting my children play on the Le Roi Smelter property?

A: Yes. Children and pregnant women are at greater risk for health problems if exposed to the elevated levels of mine-waste contamination found at the smelter property.

Voluntary Soil Testing Questions***Q: How do I enroll in the voluntary soil testing program?***

A: To enroll in the voluntary soil testing program, call the EPA help-line at 877-292-9943. The deadline to sign up is April 30, 2004. There is no fee to participate in the voluntary soil testing program.

Q: What documentation will I receive at the end of the project?

A: EPA will send you a letter with the results of the work done on your property.

Q: Will EPA test properties located outside Northport?

A: EPA hopes to offer testing to everyone who requests it, if sufficient funds are available. We encourage residents living outside Northport to request soil testing. By May, EPA expects to determine which properties can be tested.

Cleanup of Le Roi Smelter and Residential and Common-Use Properties***Q: What amounts of contamination will trigger an EPA cleanup?***

A: Contamination levels are measured in amounts called “parts per million.” The higher the parts per million (ppm) number, the greater the contamination. EPA will clean up properties where soils contain greater than 1,000 ppm of lead or 230 ppm of arsenic. For sites with lead levels between 700-1,000 ppm or arsenic levels between 100-230 ppm, EPA will determine whether to do a cleanup based on the site use and potential for people to come into contact with contamination.

Q: How long will the cleanup take?

A: Once started, EPA estimates that the cleanup of the Le Roi Smelter and residential and common-use properties will take three to four months.

Q: What will the Le Roi Smelter property look like when the cleanup is done?

A: The design of the smelter property has not been finalized. However, current plans involve demolishing the remaining smelter features and consolidating them on site; preserving lumber yard structures; consolidating non-contaminated metal debris on site; and maintaining mature plants and trees, where practical.

Q: What will my yard look like after a cleanup is done?

A: The appearance of your yard should not change very much. EPA will provide replacement soil and sod cover following any soil removal. We will work with property owners and tenants to preserve trees and minimize disruptions.

Q: Will EPA’s work damage items on my property such as septic systems or drain fields?

A: EPA and its contractors will take several precautions before beginning work on your property. We will meet with you to prepare an individual property site plan. The plan will identify vulnerable subsurface features such as septic systems and drain fields. EPA will coordinate with you and utility-locator services to confirm the location of utilities. EPA will also use construction equipment appropriately sized for residential work. In the unlikely event that EPA causes damage, it will be repaired at no expense to the homeowner.

Q: *Will there be contaminated dust in the air during the cleanup?*

A: No. EPA will use “best management practices” (BMPs) to control dust during demolition and cleanup, such as applying water and/or spray-on adhesives to surfaces, and stabilizing roads and cleared areas with mulch and/or gravel. In addition, all staff working on the project will be trained in dust control. EPA will monitor the air to ensure dust is controlled effectively.

Q: *Why must EPA demolish the smokestack on the smelter property?*

A: EPA’s concern is to remove contamination that poses potential risks to human health and the environment and to prevent re-contamination. While we recognize the historic significance of the smokestack, if left in place, it creates a health risk and liability for the property owner and the community. The cost to decontaminate and stabilize the stack is considered prohibitive.

Q: *How will EPA keep contaminated dust from spreading from the smokestack during demolition?*

A: EPA will apply a number of construction-related best-management practices. These may include spraying the stack and surrounding soils with water to saturate surfaces; spraying the stack during demolition; and applying a spray-on adhesive to prevent dust during the collapse. Air monitoring instruments will be placed throughout the construction site and community to monitor air impacts.